

## Press conference held by Péter Gottfried (Budapest, 11 December 2000)

**Caption:** On 11 December 2000, at the conference of Chief Negotiators held in Luxembourg, the Hungarian, Péter Gottfried, Head of the State Secretariat for Integration in the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, welcomes the progress made at the Nice European Council with regard to the European Union enlargement process.

**Source:** Statement by Head of the State Secretariat for Integration Péter Gottfried at the press conference following the meeting of the chief negotiators of the Luxembourg Six countries, Budapest, December 11, 2000. [ON-LINE].

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## Statement by Head of the State Secretariat for Integration Péter Gottfried at the press conference following the meeting of the chief negotiators of the Luxembourg Six countries (Budapest, December 11, 2000)

[...]

'Traditionally the objective of the meetings in this format is to have a mutual exchange of information and views about the progress of the negotiations, which are conducted individually, on a bilateral basis between the European Union and our countries. The specialty of this meeting is, indeed, that it has immediately followed the conclusion of the Nice European Council, which was awaited with great expectations, since it certainly effects the future conduct of our accession negotiations.

Even if we do not have the full text of the outcome of the Nice European Council, there was a general assessment of the outcome, and there was a general positive feeling about it. The reason for that positive feeling was that, as we know since December 1999, the present IGC on institutional reforms was considered as the last precondition of enlargement on behalf of the EU. The fact, that an agreement was reached within the schedule, is in itself positive for the prospective of enlargement. The specific agreement on institutional reforms is also important for us, since we shall soon become members of the club, and it is important what arrangements will be applicable by the time we are going to join.

Although we shall have to thoroughly study all the implications of these arrangements, I can give a brief evaluation of the major elements. As for the composition of the Commission, the outcome, which makes it possible for the new member states to be represented in the Commission with a Commissioner in the foreseeable future until the number of the member states reaches 27, is very close to what we expected. That was perhaps one of the issues we followed with greatest interest and care. The deal is, directly or indirectly, related to enlargement in many aspects. The EU has reaffirmed its earlier commitment that, together with the ratification, the EU will be ready for enlargement from the end of 2002, the beginning of 2003. That perspective was strengthened with new important elements. The wish expressed that the first new members will be participating at the European Parliamentary elections to be held in 2004, is an element that fine tunes and confirms that perspective. Also, the reference to the next IGC to be held in 2004 includes a reference to the possibility that the applicants could participate at that conference in two categories: those with full rights, and those as observers. This shows that the EU indeed counts on new member states in 2004. According to the decisions adopted in Nice, the Göteborg European Council will also evaluate the progress of accession negotiations from the point of view, whether further guidance is needed so that negotiations can be closed with the most prepared countries as soon as possible.

As far as the negotiations are concerned, it is very important that the main elements of the European Commission's proposal on an Enlargement Strategy are confirmed, strengthened with the elements, I have referred to earlier. The confirmation of the road map, in a sense that it can be applied in a flexible manner, so that well-prepared applicant countries could accelerate negotiations as compared to the time indications included in the road map, is also something very similar to what we emphasized in recent weeks in our discussions with the Commission and the member states.

All in all, the overall feeling about the conclusions is that the perspective becomes more tangible, predictable and credible. We should use this opportunity and possibility by making sure that our internal preparations are conducted accordingly. If both the EU and as many of our countries as possible will be ready, then accession can be made a reality in the foreseeable future. Thank You.'